

**Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center**  
**Avalanche Advisory**

Contact: Kevin Davis (208) 265-6686, Ed Odegaard (208) 245-6209, or John Olson (208) 265-6608

This message available by calling (208) 765-7323 or toll-free at 1-866-489-8664.

E-mail address: [kevingdavis@fs.fed.us](mailto:kevingdavis@fs.fed.us), [eodegaard@fs.fed.us](mailto:eodegaard@fs.fed.us), [jrolson@fs.fed.us](mailto:jrolson@fs.fed.us)

Good Morning, KD with the Idaho Panhandle avalanche advisory, valid for today, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010. This report does not apply to local ski areas within the forecast region and will remain in effect through midnight, March 26<sup>th</sup>. This advisory is sponsored by Idaho Parks and Recreation.

**WEATHER**

Big snow early this week. On Sunday night and into Monday many mountain locations picked up several inches of snow above 4,000 feet. Windloading produced even deeper deposits on lee aspects. Mild melt-freeze conditions affected the pack on Tuesday and Wednesday. Southerly aspects will have a melt-freeze crust that is stronger at higher elevations and on steeper slopes. Northerly aspects will have a breakable crust that grades to slushy snow as you gain elevation and then powder above 5,000 feet. More weather rolled in yesterday afternoon with rain at the lower elevations and snow up high. It seems the eastern side of Idaho got more snow by Snotel indications with the Cabinets, Bitterroots, and the St. Joe Mountains receiving about 2-3 inches. Other areas look to have gotten more rain or very heavy snow that didn't register as accumulation. Mountain temperatures at 6AM are right at or just below freezing. Winds are picking up out of the SW. For today, the NWS is calling for a better than average chance of several inches of snow. Winds will be out of the west around 10mph with stronger gusts. Temperatures will climb to the mid to high 30s. The chance of snow drops tonight but winds will continue and will remain stronger to the south. The outlook for Saturday and Sunday calls for mostly sunny skies tomorrow and temperatures in the high 30s to low 40s, maybe a little melt-freeze happening. Then Sunday, mostly cloudy skies return with mild temperatures and that SW wind kicks in again with gusts in the 20s. **The avalanche danger will increase on windloaded slopes and on southerly slopes with direct sun.**

**Avalanche conditions for the Selkirk and Cabinet Mountains are rated as MODERATE on N and E aspects greater than 35 degrees above 5,500 feet.** Natural avalanches are unlikely and human triggered avalanches are possible. **Avalanche conditions are rated as LOW on slopes less than 35 degrees.** Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely. Avalanche conditions will increase to **CONSIDERABLE** on N and E aspects above 5,500 feet if temperatures warm enough to melt surface layers and **MODERATE** on steep sun exposed slopes in the late morning and afternoon.

### Snowpack

We rode into Lake Darling in the Cabinet Mountains yesterday and found 1 foot of untracked powder on the lake and north aspects. There was a slight weak layer of graupel that has not consolidated in the 1 foot of new snow. The two layers of surface hoar have melted at 5,300 feet but I think you could still find them intact and weaker above 5,500 feet on due north aspects. We dug a pit on the avalanche path on the SE aspect of Pend Oreille Peak and found 6 inches of new snow with a breakable crust at the surface. Shears were moderate to hard at the new snow on an old melt-freeze crust. At one foot depth there is a rotten layer of old MF crust that will be the one to watch when the sun hits it. New snow on the surface crust will be something to keep an eye on as well.

### Terrain

Neither of us could believe the fluff factor of the powder on the north aspects, and it was deep. It began to get wet in the afternoon and climbing became difficult. South slopes were nice and supportive in the AM but getting a little soft and giving some concern for the rotten MF crust.



At the highest elevations, on windloaded slopes be careful for deeper deposits of new snow that could be weak. Surface hoar is still lurking on high north and east aspects. Check out this picture of high elevation north aspects for places to be careful.

**Avalanche conditions for the St. Regis Basin are rated as MODERATE on wind-loaded aspects greater than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet.**

Natural avalanches are unlikely

and human triggered avalanches are **possible**. **Avalanche conditions are rated as LOW on slopes less than 35 degrees.** Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely. Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely. Avalanche conditions will increase to **CONSIDERABLE** on N and E aspects above 5,500 feet if temperatures warm enough to melt surface layers and **MODERATE** on steep sun exposed slopes in the late morning and afternoon.

### Snowpack

Dan did some big trekking yesterday and dug numerous pits in search of the evermore elusive surface hoar. He found it buried 1 foot deep on south aspects and 1.5 feet deep on north aspects. Shears were moderate to hard on both aspects but clean Q1 shears, meaning they shear with energy, on the north. At 6,000 feet Dan found powder and no surface crust. Even though things are stabilizing, Dan noted that structurally the pack is weak so you do still have to pay attention. What does that mean? Think of a poorly built

building that stands for years and then a 6.0 earthquake hits and knocks it down. Don't be the earthquake.

#### Terrain

Adjust to spring mode Saturday to get off of steep slopes before they get too slushy. If you get into the high country and find yourself on a ridgetop be careful of the steep windloaded terrain. Winds will be transporting some snow with this storm. New snow could have some weak layers associated with windslabs or changes in temperature. Surface hoar still exists and will be weaker on north aspects above 5,500 feet.

Forecasting for the St. Joe region has ended for the 2010 season. Ed is back in timber mode.

The last advisory of the season will be issued on Friday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010.

Avalanche conditions change for better or worse continually. Backcountry travelers should be prepared to assess current conditions for themselves, plan their routes of travel accordingly, and never travel alone. Backcountry travelers can reduce their exposure to avalanche hazards by utilizing timbered trails and ridge routes and by avoiding open and exposed terrain with slope angles of 30 degrees or more. Backcountry travelers should carry the necessary avalanche rescue equipment such as a shovel, avalanche probe or probe ski poles, a rescue beacon and a well-equipped first aid kit.

Have a safe and pleasant weekend.